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OSTRANDER
McDONNELL
ISHERWOOD
FEMALE FURY

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ELSEWHERE... LASHINA KIDNAPPED PART OF THE SQUAD AND BIG BARDA, AND BROUGHT THEM ALL TO APOKOLIPS. THE IDEA IS THEY'RE TO SERVE AS A DIVERSION WHILE SHE GETS HER REVENGE ON BERNADETH.

ANYWAY, THAT'S THE THEORY.

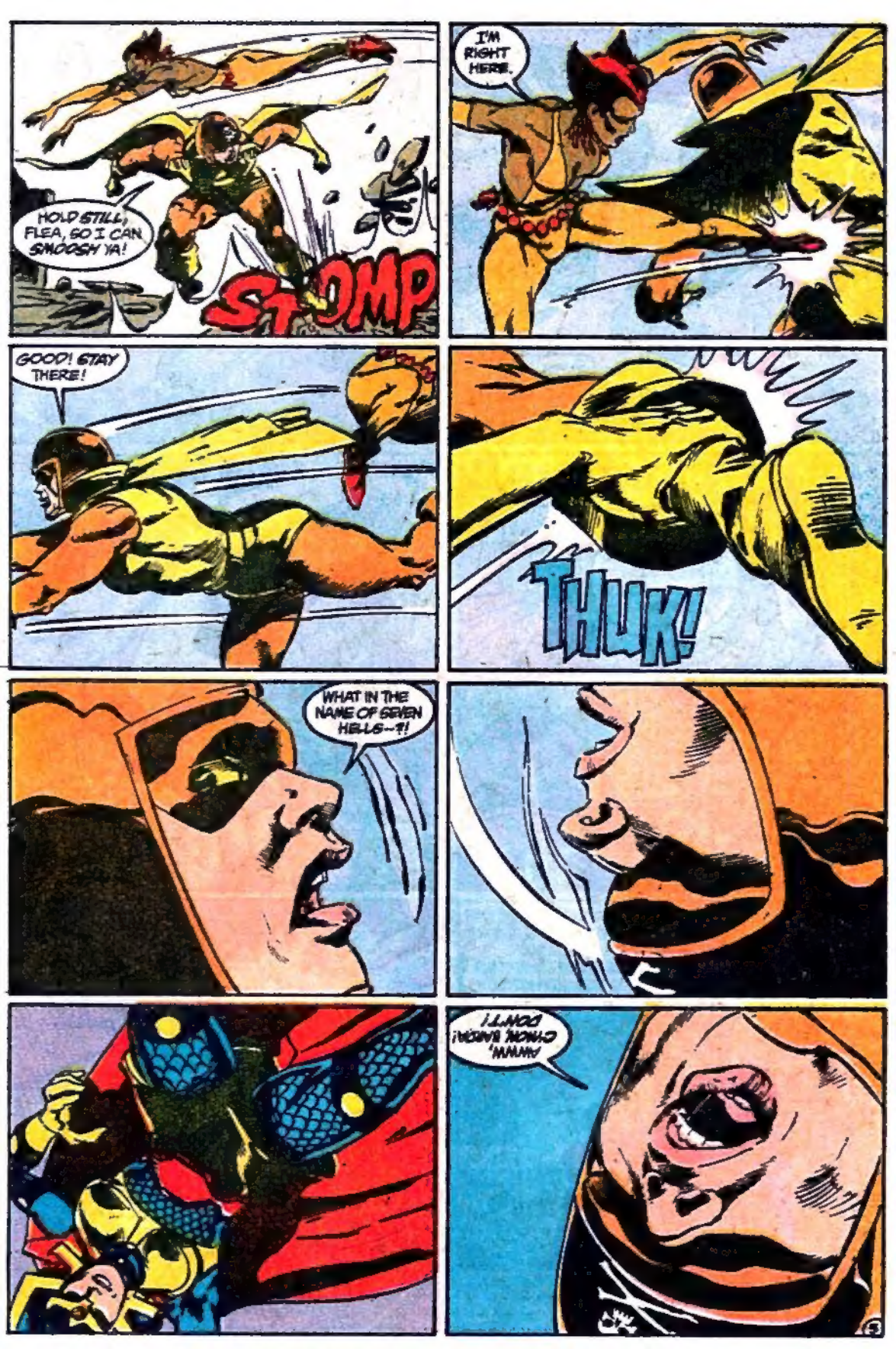
BLOODY HELL! WHO LOOKS LIKE AN EASY MARK? IF ANY OF 'EM'S EASY!

AH, THERE'S ME BUNNY!

G'DAY, LADS! I'M THE WONDER FROM DOWN UNDER -- CAPTAIN BOOMERANG!
BUDDA

NOTHING PERSONAL BUT I HATE YER STINKIN' PLANET! SO WHAT SAY YOU JUST LEMME CHOOF OFF, EH? WHAT SAY?
I ZINK YOU ARE A VURM ZAT GRANNY VANTS DEAD!
LIND VIRWIN WANDABAR ALWAYS DOES WHAT HIS GRANNY ASKS!

BECAUSE I LUFF MY GRANNY!
BLOODY HELL!


HOLD STILL, FLEA, SO I CAN SMOOSH YA!
STOMP
I'M RIGHT HERE.
GOOD! STAY THERE!
THUK!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF SEVEN HELLS--?!
AHHH, CMON, MAN! DON'T!

KU-THOOM!

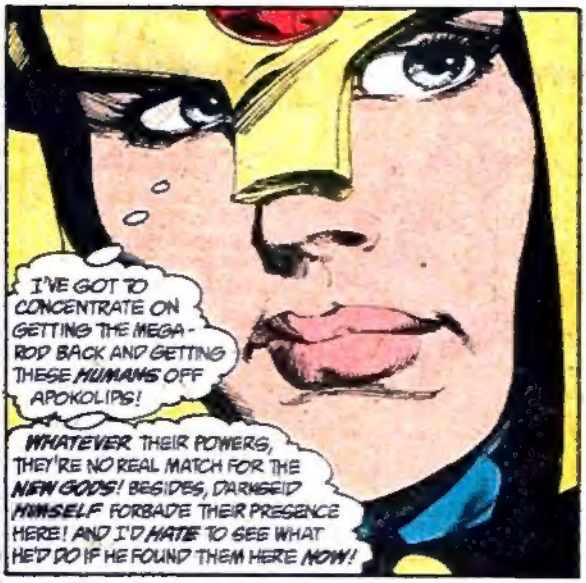
THANKS. SOUNDS LIKE BIG BERTHA HERE KNEW YOU.
HER NAME'S STOMPA AND SHE SHOULD KNOW ME. I USED TO LEAD THE FURIES.

EXCUSE ME?
LET'S NOT GET INTO ALL THAT RIGHT NOW. GIVE MISTER VICTORY OR WHATEVER-HIS-NAME-IS A HAND! I'VE GOT TO GET MY MEGA-ROD BACK!

WHATEVER YOU SAY.
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THAT SOMEONE'S RIPPED OFF THE MEGA-ROD RECENTLY!* I'M GETTING TO BE LIKE A KID WITH MITTENS!
*THE OTHER TIME WAS IN JLA #30 --APOKA-RASPLER

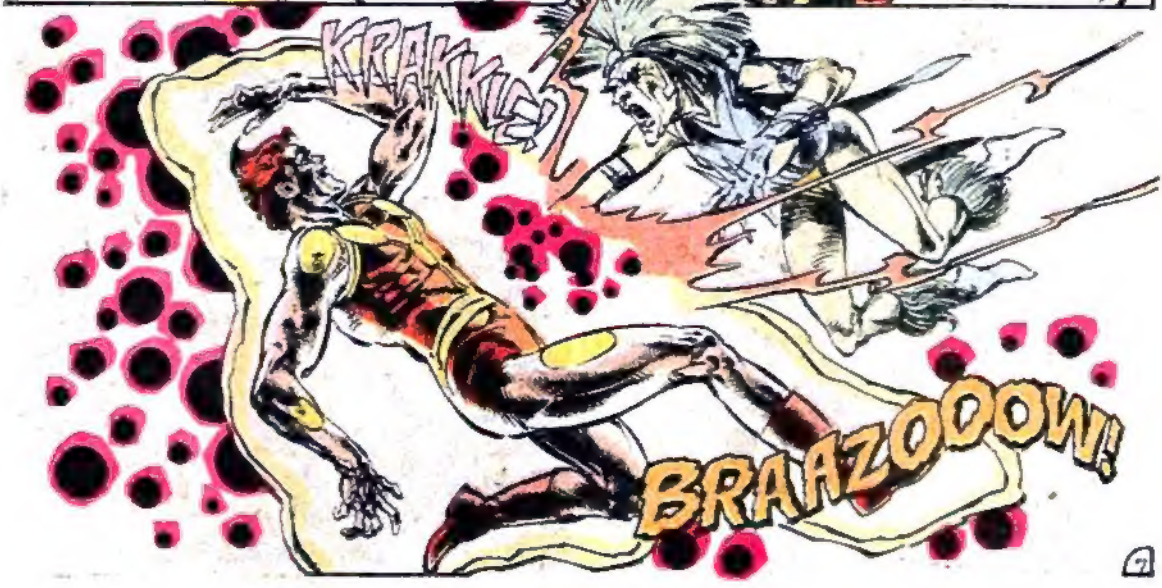
WHAMMO!

STOMPA, YOU NEVER LEARN! THOSE GUNBOOTS OF YOURS WEREN'T MEANT FOR SNEAKING UP ON PEOPLE!


I'VE GOT TO CONCENTRATE ON GETTING THE MEGA-ROD BACK AND GETTING THESE HUMANS OFF APOKOLIPS!
WHATEVER THEIR POWERS, THEY'RE NO REAL MATCH FOR THE NEW GODS! BESIDES, DARKSEID HIMSELF FORBADE THEIR PRESENCE HERE! AND I'D HATE TO SEE WHAT HE'D DO IF HE FOUND THEM HERE NOW!

MMMMMM! MAN LOOKS CUTE, MAN LOOKS SWEET IN LITTLE RED VEST! NICE LEGS, CUTIE-PIE!
HARRIET'LL SHAVE THEM FOR YOU! OKAY?
HARRIET WILL GET HER LUNCH SERVED TO HER IF SHE TRIES

GOOD! HARRIET HUNGRY!


KRAKKLE!
BRAAZOOOW!

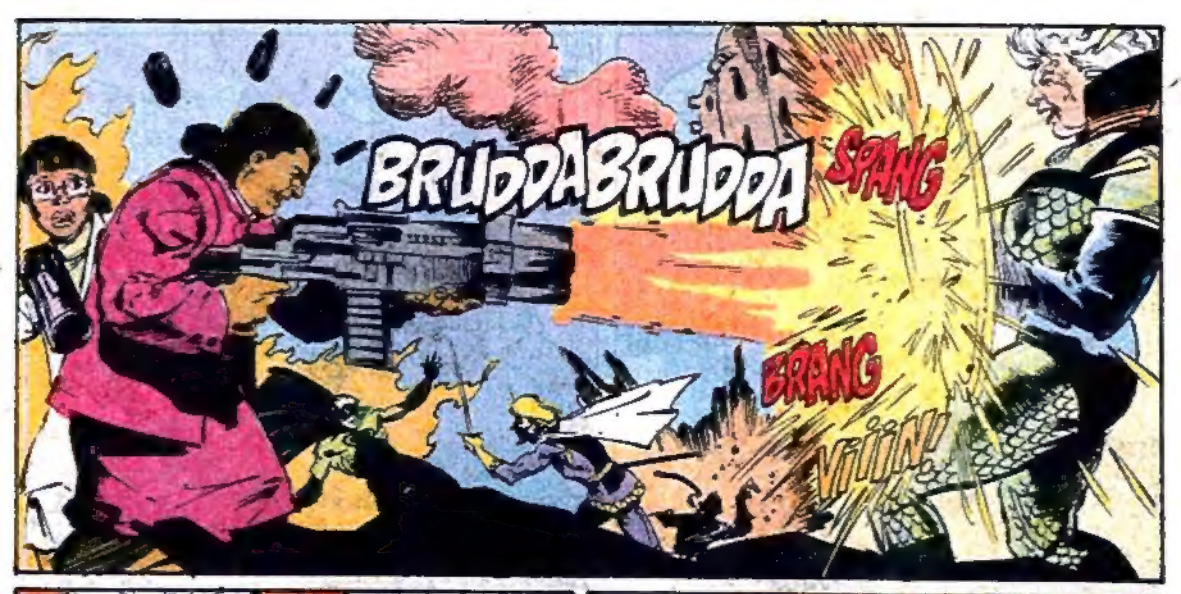
STUPID... WITCH!
THE FEEDBACK... OF DISCORDANT ENERGIES ...BETWEEN YOUR SPIKES AND MY FORCE FIELD... NEARLY KILLED US BOTH!

I LIKED IT.

HARRIET WANTS SOME MORE, DEARIE!
HA HA HA HA HA

YAH-HA-HA-HA-HAHAHA

WAS IT GOOD FOR YOU, TOO, SWEETIE?


BRUDDABRUDDA
SPANG
BRANG
VIIIN!

TESTING OLD GRANNY'S REFLEXES, ARE WE? WELL, GO RIGHT AHEAD.
I CAN DO THIS ALL DAY. HOW MANY ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION HAVE YOU LEFT, HMMMMM?
BLAM
SPEEDOW!
BRANG!

CLIK.

GRANNY'S TURN!

KLANG!

DID THAT HURT? GOOD. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO.
YEAH, IT HURT.
DOES THIS?
KRAK!
IT'S SUPPOSED TO!!
WOK!
WHAM!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, DEARIE. GRANNY LIKES PAIN.

BROM! BROM!

AFRAID OF THE DARK? YOU WILL BE.

AN ELITE SOLDIER OF DARKSEID FEARS ONLY DARKSEID!
BROM!
BROM!
BROM!

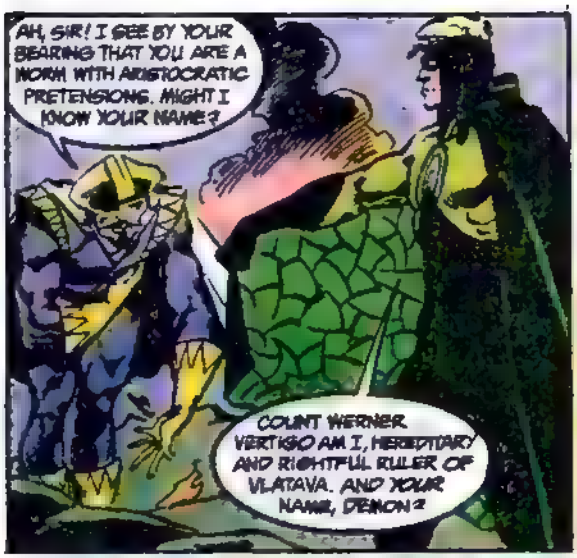
REALLY? THERE ARE MANY SCARY THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE. LET ME SHOW YOU ANOTHER.
NOOOO...

THAT'S ONE OUT, BUT THERE'S SO MANY OTHERS! AND I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I CAN DO THIS AND KEEP MY OWN SANITY.

BRADOOM!

THAT WAS TO GET YOUR ATTENTION. I AM ARTEMIZ THE HUNTRESS, AND I NAME YOU AS MY PREY.
NOW I WILL KILL YOU AND CUT OFF YOUR EARS AS TROPHIES, YOUR BODY I WILL FEED TO MY CYBERPAK!
PERHAPS. BUT WE'LL DECIDE THAT ON MY TURF, NOT YOURS!
FOLLOW ME—IF YOU DARE!
GIVE ME ENOUGH SPORT, LITTLE MORTAL, AND I WILL HONOR YOU BY MAKING YOUR HEAD A TROPHY ON THE WALL OF MY DEN!
UNUS! SECONDUS! TERTIUS! HUNT!
HAWROOO!
ARROGANT FOOL! THIS IS MY HELL AND HERE YOU ARE MY PREY!

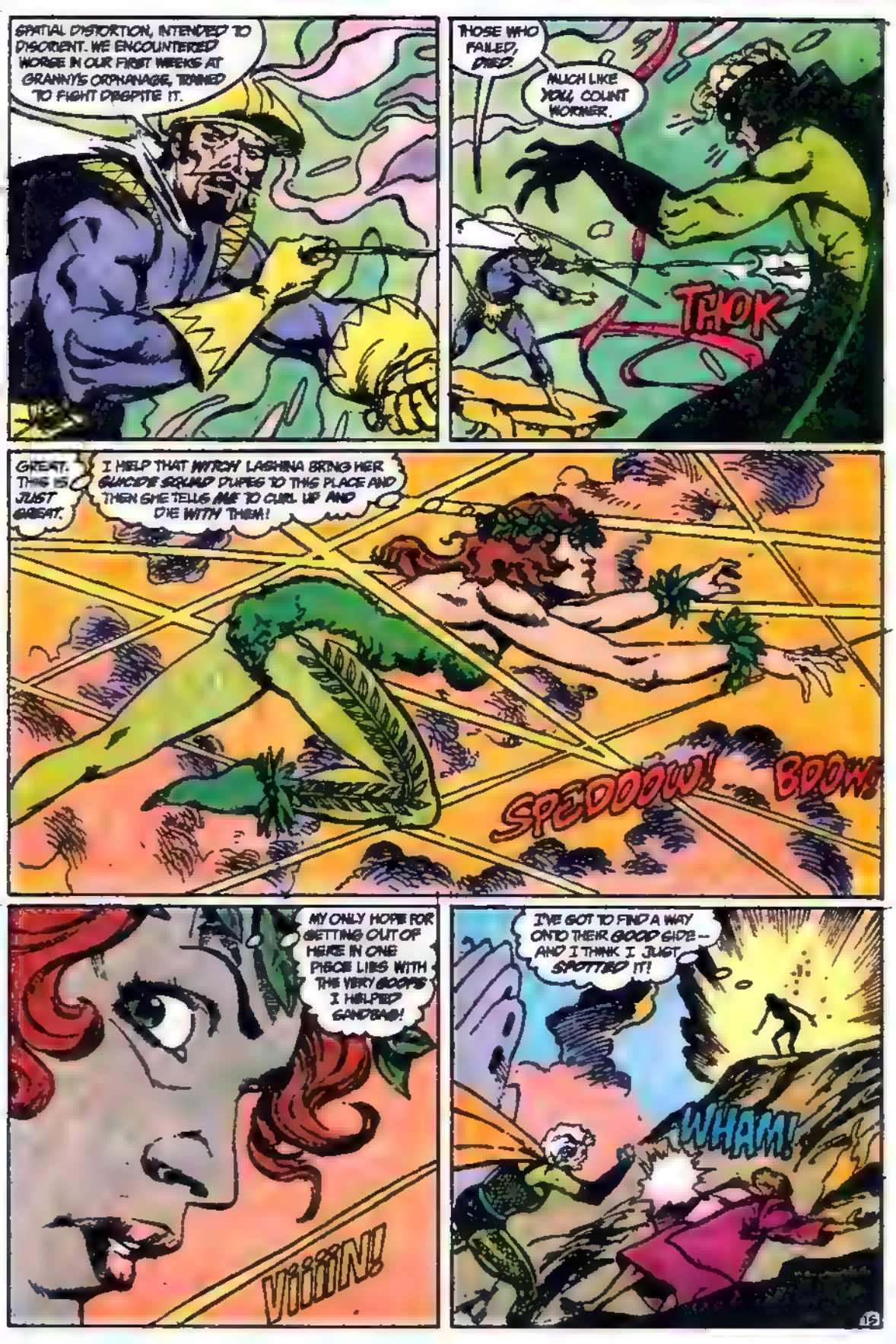
SUIT'S...IN SHREDS...! AND IT WAS THE ONLY THING KEEPING ME ALIVE!
I CAN'T FIGHT ANYMORE!
KRAK!
WHAM!
I WAS GOING TO BE INVINCIBLE... A CHAMPION FOR AMERICA!
LOOK AT ME! I'M GOING TO FILL A LONELY GRAVE! NO ONE WILL KNOW OR CARE HOW I DIED OR WHERE...!
SO WHAT DOES IT MATTER? LIE DOWN AND DIE, BILL VICKERS!
LOOK AT HER! VIXEN! STILL FIGHTING! DOESN'T SHE REALIZE...?!
MAYBE SHE DOES BETTER THAN ME.
THESE APOKOLIPS GUYS ARE THE ULTIMATE FASCISTS! THEY FLY IN THE FACE OF EVERYTHING I'VE ALWAYS SAID I BELIEVED IN!
I'VE ALWAYS TALKED A GOOD FIGHT! TIME TO PROVE I CAN DO MORE THAN JUST TALK!
AND IF I DO DIE HERE, I'LL GO DOWN SWINGING--AS MAJOR VICTORY!
BAM



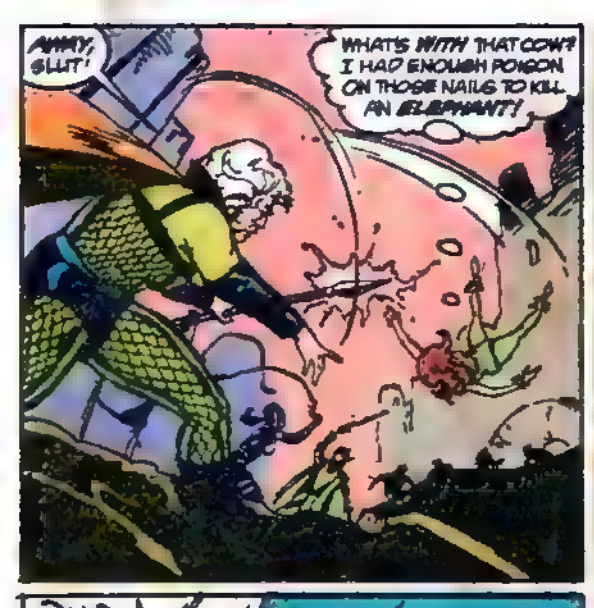
I DON'T DEAL WITH SERVANTS. GO AND BRING YOUR MASTER TO ME.

MY MASTER IS BUSY BLOWING HIS NOSE AND HAS NO TIME TO DEAL WITH INSIGNIFICANT WORMS. YOUR BUSINESS, SIR, WILL HAVE TO BE WITH ME.

YOU ARE A PRESUMPTUOUS FOOL TO ARGUE SO WITH YOUR BETTERS.

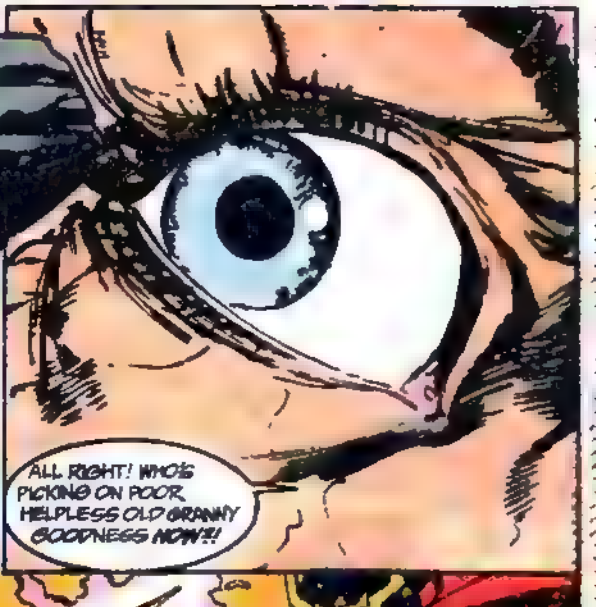

SPATIAL DISTORTION, INTENDED TO DISORIENT. WE ENCOUNTERED WORSE IN OUR FIRST WEEKS AT GRANNY'S ORPHANAGE, TRAINED TO FIGHT DESPITE IT.
THOSE WHO FAILED, DIED.
MUCH LIKE YOU, COUNT WORNER.
THOK
GREAT. THIS IS JUST GREAT.
I HELP THAT INTROY LASHINA BRING HER SUICIDE SQUAD DUPES TO THIS PLACE AND THEN SHE TELLS ME TO CURL UP AND DIE WITH THEM!
SPEDOOOW!
BOOWS
MY ONLY HOPE FOR GETTING OUT OF HERE IN ONE PIECE LIES WITH THE VERY GOONS I HELPED SANDBAG!
VIIIIN!
I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY ONTO THEIR GOOD SIDE -- AND I THINK I JUST SPOTTED IT!
WHAM!

TELL ME, LITTLE WORM -- DO THEY REGARD YOU AS SOMEONE STRONG, SOMEONE NASTY, IN YOUR OWN WORLD?
THIS IS NOT YOUR WORLD. THIS IS WHERE DARKNESS, WHERE CRUELTY AND POWER, ALL ARE BORN. YOU AREN'T "NASTY," LITTLE WORM -- YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN.
WE ARE GODS. WE DON'T ASPIRE TO CRUELTY, WE ARE CRUELTY!
NOOOOOO!
WHARAM!
OH YES GRANNY GETS TIRED OF DISCIPLINING UNRULY CHILDREN AFTER AWHILE GRANNY KNOWS SOME CHILDREN WILL JUST NEVER LEARN
SOME CHILDREN YOU NEED TO KILL.
GRANNY'S SO SWEET REMINDS ME OF MY OWN GRANMA
OF COURSE, I KILLED HER
SKERRRTCH!

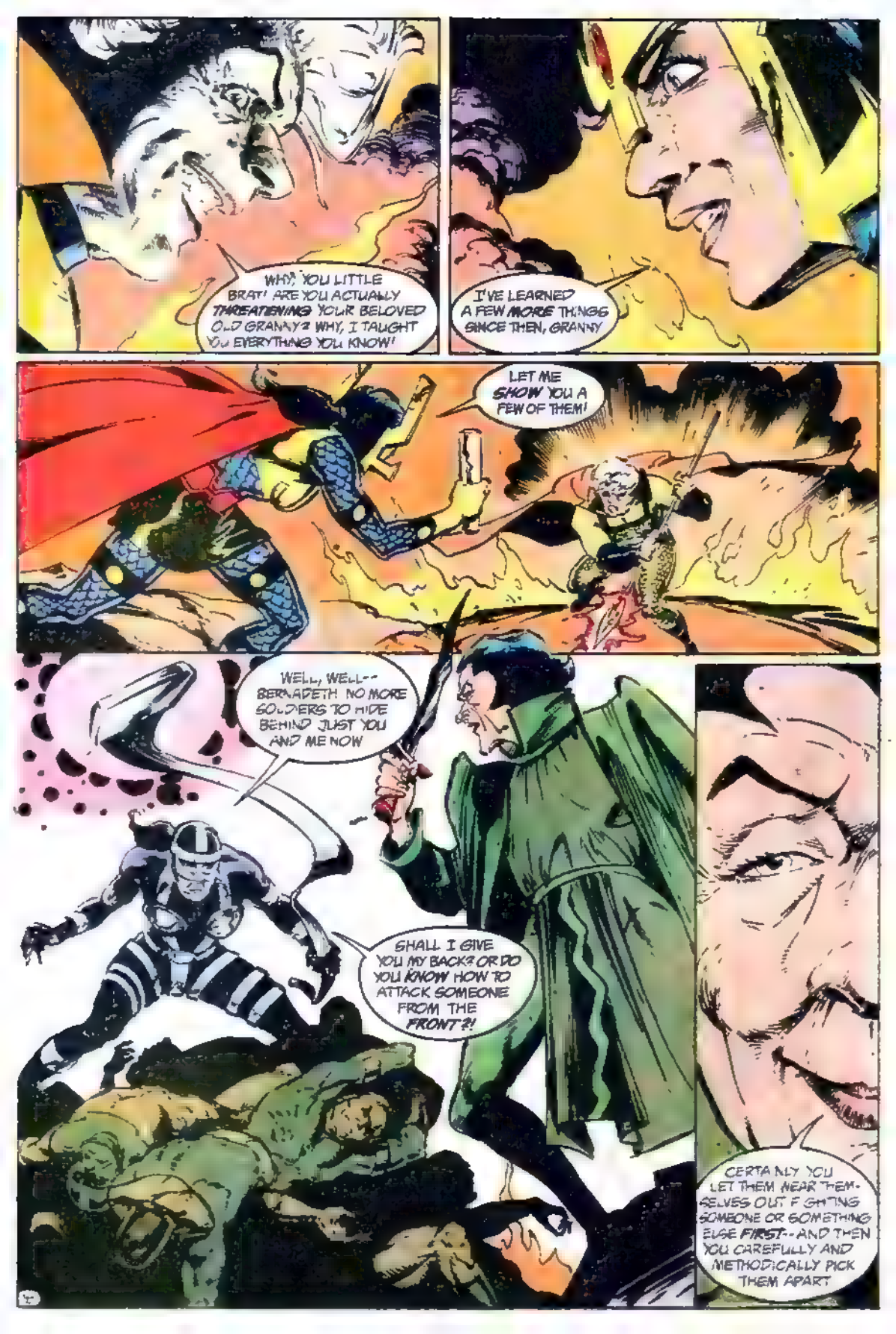

AHHH! SLUT!
WHAT'S WITH THAT COW? I HAD ENOUGH POISON ON THOSE NAILS TO KILL AN ELEPHANT!

NOW, IF THERE ARE NO MORE PETTY DISTRACTIONS...!

SMUSH!


ALL RIGHT! WHO'S PICKING ON POOR, HELPLESS OLD GRANNY GOODNESS NOW?!

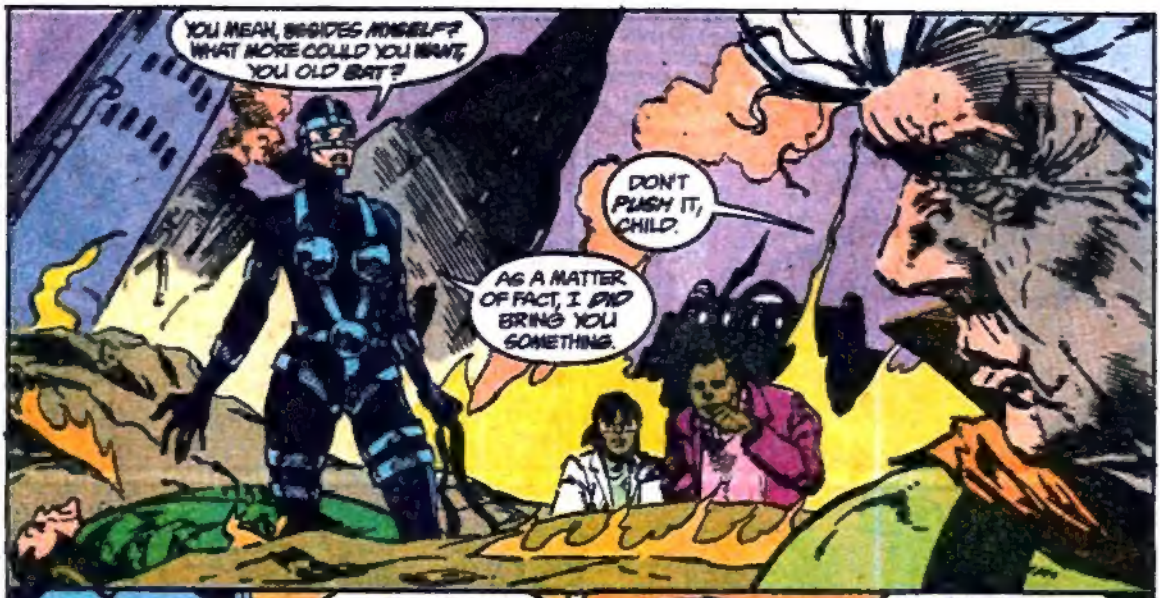
YOU'RE ABOUT AS HELPLESS AS A TANK BATTALION, YOU OLD BAT!
LEAVE THE MORTAL ALONE.


WHY, YOU LITTLE BRAT! ARE YOU ACTUALLY THREATENING YOUR BELOVED OLD GRANNY? WHY, I TAUGHT YOU EVERYTHING YOU KNOW!
I'VE LEARNED A FEW MORE THINGS SINCE THEN, GRANNY
LET ME SHOW YOU A FEW OF THEM!
WELL, WELL-- BERNADETH! NO MORE SOLDIERS TO HIDE BEHIND JUST YOU AND ME NOW
SHALL I GIVE YOU MY BACK? OR DO YOU KNOW HOW TO ATTACK SOMEONE FROM THE FRONT?!
CERTAINLY YOU LET THEM WEAR THEMSELVES OUT FIGHTING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING ELSE FIRST--AND THEN YOU CAREFULLY AND METHODICALLY PICK THEM APART

YOU PITIFUL BLOODLESS WORM! HAVE IT ALL FIGURED TO A NICETY IN YOUR OVERSIZED HEAD, DON'T YOU?!
TELL ME-- HAVE YOU CALCULATED THE DEPTHS OF MY HATE?!
WHIII KRAK!
HAVE YOU MEASURED MY DESIRE TO SEE YOU DEAD?!
WHIII KRAK!
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MUCH I WANT YOUR BLOOD?! I DOUBT IT, BERNADETH!
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!
DEAR GOD, PLEASE SAVE AMANDA. DON'T LET HER DIE. SHE SHOULDN'T BE HERE. I SHOULDN'T BE HERE
I ONLY WANTED BEN TO LOOK AT ME LIKE HE DOES MARI. IS THAT SUCH A SIN THAT I SHOULD DIE FOR IT?
OH, BEN-- WHERE ARE YOU?!

I'VE PLAYED ENOUGH WITH YOU, LASHINA THE FOOL! TIME TO LET THE FAREN KNIFE COOK YOU FROM INSIDE!
TZAAP!
YOUR WEAPON LETS YOU KILL FROM AFAR, BERNADETH, BUT YOU'VE GOTTEN TOO CLOSE! DO YOU WANT TO DIE?
SSSSSSS
NO. I ONLY WANTED YOU CLOSE ENOUGH TO DESTROY YOUR LAST WEAPON.
SNEK!
YOU'VE TAUNTED ME EVER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN AT GRANNY'S TOGETHER, LASHINA. I THINK DEATH IS THE ONLY TRUE WAY OF DETERMINING WHICH OF US IS SUPERIOR, DON'T YOU?
YOU BET.
SPAKON!

I ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE YOUR BETTER, BERNADETH!
SNAP!
THE BATTLE IS OVER!
I CLAIM MY RIGHTFUL PLACE WITH DARKSEID'S ELITE!
WELCOME HOME, DEAR LASHINA.
DID YOU BRING YOUR DEAR OLD GRANNY A PRESENT?
21



NEXT: IN FINAL BATTLE!

SUICIDE NOTES

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L-5290

Dandy Dan Raspler is on vacation this month, which sparks a bit of a reunion. John K. Snyder needed some help catching up on the deadlines so Dan called in our pal Luke McDonnell to pencil the issue. Somehow, he found the time, in between working on issues of THE PHANTOM. With John and Kim on the script, Luke on the pencils and me overseeing matters, it's just like the good ol' days! Thanks for the pinch hit, Luke!

Dear Bob, John, Kim, John K., Karl, Todd, and Carl,

I work for a construction company, and on several projects personnel have posted the following sign:

The Six Phases of a Project

1. Enthusiasm
2. Disillusionment
3. Panic and Hysteria
4. Search for the Guilty
5. Punishment of the Innocent
6. Praise and Honors for the Non-Participants

As *The Janus Directive* concluded in SUICIDE SQUAD #30 I thought of that sign. Sarge Steel got his promotion in CHECKMATE! #18 because Kobra left his agency alone; he got his promotions in this issue because he did such a good job bolting the door after the fox had taken the chickens (or Kobra had slain thirty-eight knights), and President Bush's restructuring of the intelligence community seemed overly hard on Mrs. Waller. Oh, John Ostrander does great things with Republicans I'll never vote for—Bush here, Reagan in #14—but General Eiling is far more dangerous than Amanda. Perhaps she only thought of Ben Turner as the warhead went up, but that's one person more than Eiling thought of when *he* proposed the idea in chapter nine.

The Janus Directive kept trying to become something spectacular, but never quite managed it: Kobra as avatar of the Kali-Yuga was quite fitting after his rejection of doing same in MANHUNTER #14, yet too much of "Endgame" was sound effects and tedium. Certainly you can save Lois Lane's desire to settle the score for later; Firestorm has his own title to bear out Captain Atom's rudeness or his own fears; and an arrested Kobra is not a defeated Kobra. All that stood out in the end, however, was the fine artwork, the funny lines (Jewelee, Boomerang and Manhunter, and Peacemaker and Duchess) and the Talking Heads quotation from the Checkmate Knight. No party, no disco, no fooling around—not much of anything, as a matter of fact. I would gladly buy a bi-weekly SUICIDE SQUAD, but not one with so inane a plot.

Therefore, bring on Father Craemer. Not because I like "Personal Files" tales (though I do); not because you need to take a breather (though you do); but because you need a good story after the last two months.

Charles J. Sperling
37-15 Parsons Boulevard
Apt. 4C
Flushing, NY 11354

Your comments, in the end, mirror many of the same feelings and frustrations shared by Jonathan Peterson and myself. Perhaps we were too ambitious, or maybe we didn't give ourselves enough time. Interestingly, the person with the most incisive comments was our own Editor-in-Chief, Jenette Kahn. While the balance of the mail was in favor of the storyline and its broad scope, we have all learned a lot and should we do something like this again, it will be vastly superior. For now, though, let's look at the rest of the mail:

*****

Dear Editor,

Ah, *The Janus Directive* has come to an end, but with a cliffhanger ending to warrant a sequel in the foreseeable future. Just a few random thoughts in conclusion. To wit:

Did anyone notice that Kobra spoke *perfect* English this time? No hissing, as opposed to earlier chapters. Here's the cliffhanger I referred to—notice the almost cosmic gleam in Kobra's eyes at the end, as he's being shipped off to Belle Reve? I doubt the real Kobra's been captured. His battle with Manhunter was too quick and easy. The above clues cause me to draw that conclusion.

In CHECKMATE! #18, Sarge Steel was portrayed as a normal fellow in an executive capacity. Here, Snyder draws him as if he could pass for Major Force's twin brother. Gimme a break! At least Snyder did a near accurate President Bush to compensate. Now, if he can avoid the temptation to draw Vice President Quayle as a man-child with a penchant for giggling like Pee-Wee Herman....

Did Captain Atom happen to notice his old sparring partners Punch & Jewelee battling on his side of the fence? I'd like to see those two battle the Captain in his mag, after a dishonorable discharge from the Squad, of course.

Now that Sarge Steel is in charge, essentially, of both CHECKMATE! and SUICIDE SQUAD, let me suggest an additional detail—give the Sarge his own mag! It's only fair.

Prediction: Kobra will be back next year with a more "cosmic" scheme, as a sequel to *The Janus Directive*. Put that in the bank, homeboy.

Jacob Gilbert
118 4th Street Apt. 1
Troy, NY 12180

Ah, Jacob, so close and yet so far. You have some very good theories and guesses but boy, are you off base. To begin: despite the speech difference, that was indeed the real Kobra that was captured. Otherwise, the Lords of Chaos would not have chosen to speak with him as seen on the last page and last panel of issue #30. Also, the battle between Manhunter and Kobra occurred off-panel; and it's wrong of you to say it was too easy. Manhunter did not exactly look rested.

Captain Atom has never battled Punch and Jewelee. As revealed in SECRET ORIGINS #28, Nightshade and King Faraday fought the duo and Faraday allowed the battle to be credited to Captain Atom in the now-revealed cover-up. It's doubtful they'll turn up in that title since John and Kim have delicious plans for them.

People around the offices, including the infamous writing duo of Barbara and Karl Kesel, have plans for Sarge Steel, so keep your eyes open. And no, we have no plans for a sequel as yet and if so, it's doubtful Kobra will be a part of it. After all, our mentor, Julie Schwartz, drilled into us all the famous phrase, "Be original!"

*****

Dear Suicide Squad,

Never did I think that a book as great as this could get any better but, as always, you guys surprised me. *The Janus Directive* is the greatest crossover story I've ever read; my sincerest, heartfelt compliments to all the creative staff, as well as the guest artists, and, of course, the editors for keeping it all in line.

I can't wait to see what the long-term effects of the story will be, including what kind of overall leader Sarge Steel will be. If subsequent issues are anything like the story, there'll be no stopping us.

As always, keep up the great work, guys (and girl). Things just keep getting better and better.

Louis Ambring
13112 Duffield
LaMirada, CA 90638

*****

Dear Mr. Ostrander and Ms. Yale,

This issue was great, but let me start at the beginning.

First, the cover was the best since issue #6, #9 and Annual #1. Karl's outdone himself this time.

Next up is the artwork. I hope you keep Mr. Snyder on for a long time to come. He's the only artist (in my opinion) other than Karl Kesel or Luke McDonnell for the Squad.

Now to the story. Great. Love it. I really like the idea of having Sarge Steel overseeing *all* meta-human covert activities. Maybe he can keep Amanda Waller on a leash and keep her from screwing up and getting someone else killed. Also, with all of the covert meta-humans headed up by one guy, maybe we'll get more crossovers with the Squad and Checkmate. And maybe, just maybe, we Peacemaker fans will get to see more of him here, or in the pages of CHECKMATE!.

—Another thing I liked about this issue (and the whole *Janus Directive*) is the characters you've used in it. Like I've said before, I'm a Peacemaker fan, and have been since the CRISIS, but have never been able to get the books he made appearances in (i.e., his mini-series and VIGILANTE), so I really enjoyed his appearance both here and in CHECKMATE! and hope to see more of him.

I've also enjoyed the appearances of Manhunter and the Force of July throughout. I really liked the Force of July in OUTSIDERS ANNUAL #1 so I enjoyed seeing them here, but what I *really* liked was seeing them offed one by one. Although I *don't* see why you had to kill Mayflower; she would've been great in the Squad.

Marson Fedrick
PO Box 514
Ellisville, MS 39437

Peacemaker has taken up permanent residence in CHECKMATE! and Paul Kupperberg is working up plans for him beyond that title.

*****

Dear Janus Directors,

This whole escapade was touted to be the affair to organize and define the numerous intelligence agencies in the DC Universe. Considering the temperament of the various individuals involved, I'm not convinced.

The major threat was Kobra. This group will be back again. They will view this defeat as only a slight setback to their aim of world conquest. No real gains here either.

So, what was accomplished? Two things: 1) we learned that Checkmate is infiltratable and more people know about it than previously thought (or should); and 2) the virtual elimination of the Force of July. Since the first will be dealt with in the pages of CHECKMATE!, I'd like to comment on the second.

The Force of July were a band of heroes who first came to the scene to battle the Outsiders. They were billed as freedom fighters and fought well, but they were kind of silly. Major Victory, Lady Liberty, Mayflower, Sparkler, Silent Majority. To the first four, I could say good riddance with ease. Silent Majority, however, intrigued me. The combination of his powers of duplication and his looking a lot like Hal Jordan seemed to make Silent Majority much more real than the others. I actually felt a lump in my throat when I realized that his last body-duplicate had been shot.

In retrospect, with the rest of the team gone, maybe Major Victory should have died as well.

Erik Skov
Brighton, MA

*****

Dear Bob,

After reading the eleven-part epic, I felt the need to write. This storyline shows why SUICIDE SQUAD is my favorite DC title, with QUESTION being a strong second. This stands out as probably the best crossover series I have ever read. Kudos to all creative personnel involved. The FIRESTORM and MANHUNTER chapters were particularly good; I'll probably even start buying them regularly. The only negative thing I can really say is about the CAPTAIN ATOM issue. Why it was labelled as a crossover, I'll never know. Perhaps it was sales, but, whatever the reason, it was pretty lame.

I was sad to see the demise of the Force of July. Even though I had never seen them in action before, it seemed to me they were disposed of pretty callously. I particularly liked Silent Majority and Lady Liberty. Perhaps Major Victory saved her torch and it can be passed on to another.

The Squad's new line-up is fairly decent, although I feel the following things should be dealt with, in order:

1) Conclude the Duchess/Lashina plotline.

2) Kill Captain Boomerang. He is really getting on my nerves and is fairly useless. I'm sure Ravan wouldn't mind cutting his throat.

3) Resolve the Bronze Tiger/Flo/Vixen love triangle.

Also, please bring back Deadshot. I'm sure he and Ravan would get along real well together.

Aaron Toomey
1144 Stratford Street
Barberton, OH 44203

1) Ok.
2) No.
3) Done.
And Deadshot's back!

*****

Dear Squadroneers,

Thank you for creating one of the most consistently action-packed and intriguing books every month. Along with another Ostrander book, I always look forward to reading the SS for its quick, calculated action.

I think the best word for the book is moody.

John K. Snyder and Luke McDonnell each have a knack for catching a character's mood at exactly the precise moment and freezing beautifully in a single panel. The shadings and colors have been very gripping. I loved it when Mark Shaw just chucked the Kobra leader over that railing.

Craig D. Kolakowski
1405 East Joppa Road
Baltimore, MD 21204

*****

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Next issue is our finale in Apokolips. The rescue team has arrived but what has happened to Briscoe? And what of Flo? And let's not forget that Dr. Light has made a momentous decision—wimphood no more! I guess this means 22 pages crammed with intrigue, twists, and resolutions as Lashina and Bernadeth battle to the death—and we mean death. Trust me, you won't want to miss this one.

With that said, let me point out that Dan and John are also working some pretty nifty miracles with FIRESTORM and you may want to check out the upcoming "Elemental Wars" starting in issue #91.

Thanks for your mail and we'll see you back here in a month! Until then, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger